

NEWS RELEASE

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**DeNUCCI PROJECTS PLYMOUTH SHERIFF'S
BUDGET DEFICIT AT \$613,000**

State Auditor Joe DeNucci, in a transition audit done at the request of the Plymouth County Sheriff, reported today that the Sheriff's Department faces a projected budget deficit of \$613,791 for the current fiscal year. But DeNucci said the deficit could go much higher due to an unstable budget situation facing the department.

The projected deficit estimate is based on a review of the Sheriff's Department's finances for the first nine months of the fiscal year ending June 30. A major reason for the deficit is lower revenues due to a decline in the inmate population and the resulting loss of federal reimbursements.

However, DeNucci's transition audit noted that the Plymouth County Sheriff is facing significant spending obligations that include more than \$950,000 in unpaid bills, potential legal settlements, and a change in Plymouth County policy that requires the Sheriff's Department to pay the employer's share of retiree health insurance costs for the first time.

Due to the uncertainties surrounding these extraordinary costs, DeNucci said, it is impossible to project a final deficit amount with any degree of confidence.

DeNucci said his transition audit shows that the fiscal management in the Sheriff's Department needs to be improved dramatically in order to better track revenues, expenditures and spending obligations. DeNucci also called for better communication with the County Government Finance Review Board, which approves the Sheriff's budget.

In the short term, DeNucci urged the Sheriff's Department to continue its policy of ensuring that payroll, food services and other vital operational costs are met before paying other bills.

"The Sheriff's first priority must be to get through the year without compromising public safety," said DeNucci.